

K. Barrington

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INSTANCES of NAVIGATORS
who have reached HIGH NORTHERN
LATITUDES.

Read at a Meeting of the Royal Society, May 19, 1774.

AS I was the unworthy proposer of the Voyage towards the North Pole, which the Council of the Royal Society thought proper to recommend to the Board of Admiralty, I think it my duty to lay before the Society such intelligence as I have happened to procure with regard to navigators having reached high Northern latitudes^a; because some of these accounts seem to promise, that we may proceed further towards the Pole than the very able Officers, who were sent on this destination last year, were permitted to penetrate, notwithstanding their repeated efforts to pass beyond eighty degrees and an half.

I shall begin, however, by making an observation or two with regard to the Greenland fishery, which will in a great measure account for our not being able to procure many instances of nearer approaches to the Pole, than the Northern parts of Spitzbergen.

Fifty years ago such apprehensions were entertained of navigating even in the loose, or what is called *sailing ice*, that the crews commonly continued on shore, and only pursued the whales in boats, which they cured also on land.

The demand, however, for oil increasing, whilst the number of fish rather decreased, they were obliged to proceed to sea in quest of them, and

^a It is well known that there are many such accounts in print, but to these I need not refer the Society.

now by experience and adroitness seldom suffer from the obstructions of ice ^b.

The masters of ships, which are employed in this trade, have no other object but the catching as many whales as possible, which as long as they can procure in more Southern latitudes, they certainly will not go in search of at a greater distance from the port to which they are to return: they therefore seldom proceed beyond N. lat. 80, unless driven by a strong Southerly wind, or other accident.

Whenever this happens also, it is only by very diligent inquiries that any information can be procured; for the masters, not being commonly men of science, or troubling their heads about the improvement of geographical knowledge, never mention these circumstances on their return, because they conceive that no one is more interested about these matters than they are themselves. Many of the Greenland masters are likewise directed to return after the early fishery is over, provided they have tolerable success; so that they have no opportunity of penetrating to the Northward.

To these reasons it may be added, that no ships were ever sent before last summer with express instructions to reach the Pole, if possible; as all other attempts have been to discover a N. E. or N. W. passage, which were soon defeated by falling in with land.

Having thus endeavoured to shew that the instances of ships reaching high Northern latitudes must necessarily be rare, I shall now proceed to lay before the Society, such as I have been able to hear of since the voyage towards the N. Pole was undertaken during last summer.

When this was determined upon, and mentioned in the News Papers, it became matter of conversation amongst the crews of the guardships; and Andrew Leekie, an intelligent seaman on board the Albion (then stationed at Plymouth), informed some of the officers that he had been as far North as $84\frac{1}{2}$.

When he was asked further on this head, he said that he was on board the Reading, Captain Thomas Robinson, in 1766; and that whilst he was shaving the captain, Mr. Robinson told him that he had probably never been so far to the Northward before, as they had now reached the above-mentioned degree of latitude.

Having happened to hear this account of Leekie's, on my return to London this winter I found out Captain Robinson, who remembered his having had this conversation with Leekie, but said that he was mistaken in supposing that they had reached $84\frac{1}{2}$ N. lat. as they were only in $82\frac{1}{2}$.

^b These particulars I received from Captain Robinson, whom I shall have hereafter occasion to mention.

Captain Robinson then explained himself, that he had at this time computed his latitude by the run back to Hakluyt's Headland in 24 hours; from which, and other circumstances mentioned in my presence before two sea officers, they told me afterwards that they had little or no doubt of the accuracy of his reckoning. Mr. Robinson likewise remembers that the sea was then open, so that he hath no doubt of being able to penetrate to 83, but how much further he will not pretend to say.

This same captain, in the ship *St. George*, was, on the 15th of June 1773, in N. lat. $81^{\circ} 16'$, by a very accurate observation with an approved Hadley's quadrant, in which he also made the proper allowance for the refraction in high Northern latitudes, at which time seeing some whales spouting to the Northward, he pursued them for five hours, so that he must have reached $81\frac{1}{2}$, when the sea was open to the Westward and E. N. E. as far as he could distinguish from the mast-head. His longitude was then 8 degrees E. from the meridian of London.

Captain Robinson is a very intelligent seaman, and hath navigated the Greenland seas these twenty years, except during the interval that he was employed in surveying by the Hudson's Bay Company ^c.

I could add some other, perhaps interesting, particulars, which I have received from Captain Robinson, with regard to Spitzbergen and the Northern seas; I will only mention, however, that he thinks he could spend a winter not uncomfortably in the most Northern parts we are acquainted with, as there are three or four small settlements of Russians in Spitzbergen for the sake of the skins of quadrupeds, which are then more valuable, than if the animal is taken in summer.

The next instance I shall mention of a navigator who hath proceeded far Northwards is that of Captain Cheyne, who gave answers to certain queries drawn up by Mr. Dalrymple, F. R. S. in relation to the Polar seas, and which were communicated last year to the Society.

Captain Cheyne states in this paper, that he hath been as far as N. Lat. 82, but does not specify whether by *observation* or his *reckoning*, though from many other answers to the interrogatories proposed, it should seem that he speaks of the latitude by *observation*. Unfortunately captain Cheyne is at present on the coast of Africa, so that further information on this head cannot be now procured from him.

Whilst the ships destined for the N. Pole were preparing, a most ingenious and able sea officer, Lieutenant John Cartwright, told me that twelve years ago he had been informed of a very remarkable voyage made by Captain Mac-Callam as far nearly as 84° N. Lat.

^c He lived during this winter in Queen-street, near Greenland-dock, Rotherhith: he hath sailed, probably, by this time on the Greenland fishery. With regard to his having been in N. lat. $81^{\circ} 30'$, in June 1773, he can prove it by his journal, if that evidence should be required.

This account Mr. Cartwright had received from a brother officer, Mr. James Watt, now a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, who was on board Captain Mac-Callam's ship.

I thought it my duty to acquaint the Admiralty with this intelligence, who would have sent for Mr. Watt, but he was then employed on the coast of America.

On his return from thence within the last month, Mr. Cartwright introduced a conversation with regard to Captain Mac-Callam's voyage, when Mr. Watt repeated all the circumstances which he had mentioned to him twelve years ago; after which Mr. Cartwright, thinking that I should be glad to hear the particulars from Mr. Watt himself, was so good as to bring him to my chambers, when I received from him the following information :

In the year 1751 Mr. Watt, then not quite seventeen years of age, went on board the *Campbeltown* of Campbeltown, captain Mac-Callam, which ship was then employed in the Greenland fishery.

It seems that during the time the whales copulate, the crews of the Greenland vessels commonly amuse themselves on shore.

Captain Mac-Callam however (who was a very able and scientific seaman) thought that a voyage to the N. Pole would be more interesting, and that the season being a fine one, he had a chance of penetrating far to the Northward, as well as returning before the later fishery took place. He accordingly proceeded without the least obstruction to $83\frac{1}{2}$, when the sea was not only open to the Northward, but they had not seen a speck of ice for the last three degrees ^d, and the weather at the same

^d There was also no distant land then in sight, a circumstance which is confirmed by captain Alexander Cluny in a map prefixed to a publication in quarto, entitled, *The American Traveller*, printed for Dilly and Almon, 1769. This very enterprizing traveller was in Hudson's Bay in the year 1744, whence he endeavoured to discover the N. W. passage by land, of which he thus speaks in a letter to Lord Dartmouth: "I have had the honour to inform your Lordship of the discoveries I made in the year 1744, as also that since that time I have traversed the whole coast of America from lat. 68 North to Cape Florida, and penetrated *some thousands of miles* Westward into the wilderness, many parts of which were never before trodden by European feet." He was accompanied by five men in this enterprize who travelled upon snow shoes, whilst their luggage was drawn in a sledge by three dogs; Cluny himself preceded with a compass in his hand.

In 1746 he was in a Greenland ship when he reached $83\frac{1}{2}$ N. lat. and nearly in the same meridian with Hakluyt's Headland, which spot he hath marked in a map engraved under his direction; and adds, that he neither saw land or ice.

The reason of his not putting his name to the letters addressed to Lord Dartmouth, under the title of *The American Traveller*, was, that he only supplied the facts, but the letters were written by another hand from his materials. He meditated however a publication of his American journey over-land just before his death, which happened about four years ago, and his papers are now said to be in the hands of a Mr. Johnson at Quebec.

same time was temperate; in short Mr. Watt hath never experienced a more pleasant navigation.

It need be scarcely observed, that the latitude of $83\frac{1}{2}$ was determined by observation, as the great object of the voyage was to reach the Pole; the Captain therefore, the Mate, and young Mr. Watt, determined the latitude from time to time, both by Davis and Hadley's quadrants: to this I may add, that their departure and return were from and to Hakluyt's Headland.

When they were advancing into these high Northern latitudes, the Mate complained that the compass was not steady, on which Captain Mac-Callam desisted from his attempt, though with reluctance; knowing that if any accident happened, he should be blamed by his owners, who would be reminded certainly by the Mate of the protests he had made against the ship's proceeding further Northward.

Several of the crew however were for prosecuting their discoveries, and Mr. Watt particularly remembers the chagrin which was expressed by a very intelligent seaman, whose name was John Kelly; Captain Mac-Callam also, after his return from that voyage, hath frequently said, in the presence of Mr. Watt and others, that, if the Mate had not been faint-hearted, he possibly might have reached the Pole.

Both Captain Mac-Callam and the Mate are now dead, and it is rather doubtful whether the ship's journal can be procured.

It remains therefore to be considered what may be objected to the credibility of this very interesting account.

I have stated that Mr. Watt was not at the time this voyage took place quite seventeen years of age, but I have also stated that he observed himself (as well as the Master and Mate), from time to time. Is it therefore more extraordinary he should remember with accuracy that, two and twenty years ago, he had been in N. Lat. $83\frac{1}{2}$, than that at the same distance of time, he might recollect that he had been at a friend's house which was situated 83 miles and an half from London? Or rather indeed is not his memory, with regard to this high latitude, much more to be depended upon, as the circumstance is so much more interesting?

To this I may add, that it being his first voyage, and so remarkable a one, Mr. Watt now declares that he remembers more particulars relative to it, than perhaps in any other since that time; Mr. Watt also being of a scientific turn, the high Northern latitude was likely to make a more strong impression upon him: other sea officers have like-

Quebec.—I have made inquiries with regard to the character of this Captain Cluny from four different persons to whom he was known, and they all concur in representing him as a man of strict honour and veracity. He could indeed have no interest in deceiving his readers with regard to this point, because his work relates entirely to America.

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wife told me, that the circumstances of their first voyage are most fresh in their memory, the reason for which is too obvious to be dwelt upon.

If Mr. Watt's recollection however is distrusted, this objection extends equally to Captain Mac-Callam's frequent declarations, that, if the apprehensions of the Mate had not prevented, he might possibly have reached the N. Pole; and how could he have conceived this unless he had imagined himself to have been in a very high Northern latitude?

But it may be possibly said, that this voyage took place above twenty years since, and that therefore at such a distance of time no one's memory can be relied upon.

It is true indeed that Mac-Callam made this attempt in 1751, but Mr. Watt continued his services the following year in a Greenland ship, and therefore, traversing nearly the same seas, must have renewed the recollection of what he had experienced in the preceding voyage, though he did not then proceed further than N. Lat. 80.

This however brings it only to 1752, but I have already stated, that within these twelve years he mentioned all the particulars above related to his brother officer, Lieutenant Cartwright.

Mr. Watt also frequently conversed with Captain Mac-Callam about this voyage after both of them had quitted the Greenland ships; Mr. Watt rising regularly to be a Lieutenant in his Majesty's service, and Captain Mac-Callam becoming Purser of the Tweed man of war.

It so happened that in the year of the expedition against Bellisle, Mr. Watt, Captain Mac-Callam, and Mr. Walker (commonly called Commodore Walker, from his having commanded the Royal Family privateers in the late war) met together at Portsmouth, when they talked over the circumstances of this Greenland voyage, which Mr. Walker was interested in, by having been the principal owner of the Campbeltown.

Mr. Watt's memory was therefore again refreshed with regard to all these circumstances: Mr. Walker is indeed now in Spain, but is expected to return very soon, which if he should do, I will not fail to lay an account before the Society of the conversation which then passed at Portsmouth.

Mr. Watt and Captain Mac-Callam met also eleven years ago in London, when they as usual conversed about the having reached so high a Northern latitude.

I now come to my last proof, which I received from Dr. Campbell, the able continuator and reviser of Harris's Collection of Voyages.

In that very valuable compilation, Commodore Roggewein's circumnavigation makes a most material addition, some of the most interesting particulars of which were communicated by Dr. Daillie, who was a
native

native of Holland*, and lived in Racquet-court, Fleet-street, about the year 1745, where he practised physick.

Dr. Campbell went to thank Daillie for the having furnished him with Commodore Roggewein's voyage, when Daillie said that he had been further both to the Southward and to the Northward than perhaps any other person who ever existed.

He then explained himself as to the having been in high Southern latitudes, by sailing in Roggewein's fleet†, and as to his having been far to the Northward, he gave the following account:

Between fifty and sixty years ago it was usual to send a Dutch ship of war to superintend the Greenland fishery, though it is not known whether this continues to be a regulation at present.

Dr. Daillie (then young) was on board the Dutch vessel employed on this service‡, and during the interval between the two fisheries, the Captain determined, like Mr. Mac-Callam, to try whether he could not reach the Pole, and accordingly penetrated (to the best of Dr. Campbell's recollection) as far as N. Lat. 88, when the weather was warm, the sea perfectly free from ice, and rolling like the bay of Biscay. Daillie now pressed the Captain to proceed, but he answered that he had already gone too far by having neglected his station, for which he should be blamed in Holland, on which account also he would suffer no journal to be made, but returned as speedily as he could to Spitzbergen.

There are undoubtedly two objections which may be made to this account of Dr. Daillie's, which are, that it depends not only upon his own memory, but that of Dr. Campbell, as no journal can be produced, for the reason which I have before stated.

The conversation between Dr. Campbell and Daillie arose from the accidental mention of Roggewein's voyage to the Southward; and can it be supposed that Daillie invented this circumstantial narrative on the spot, without having actually been in a high Northern latitude?

If this be admitted to have been improbable, was he not likely to have remembered with accuracy what he was so much interested about, as to have pressed the Dutch Captain to have proceeded to the Pole?

But it may be said also that we have not this account from Daillie himself, but at second hand from Dr. Campbell, at the distance of thirty years from the conversation.

To this it may be answered, that Dr. Campbell's memory is most remarkably tenacious, as is well known to all those who have the pleasure of his acquaintance; and, as he hath written so ably for the

* He was a grandson of Daillie, who was author of a book, much esteemed by the Divines, entitled "De Usu Patrum."

† Roggewein reached S. lat. 62° 30'. See Harris.

‡ Dr. Campbell does not recollect in what capacity he served, but, as he afterwards practised physic, he might probably have been the Surgeon.

promotion of geographical discoveries in all parts of the globe, such an account could not but make a strong impression upon him, especially as he received it just after the first edition of his compilation of voyages.

No one easily forgets what is highly interesting to him; and, though I do not pretend to have so good a memory as Dr. Campbell, I have scarcely a doubt, but that if I should live thirty years longer, and retain my faculties, I shall recollect with precision every latitude which I have already stated in this paper.

What credit, however, is to be given to all these narratives is entirely submitted to the Society, as I have stated them most fully with every circumstance which may invalidate, as well as support them; and if I have endeavoured to corroborate them by the observations which I have made, it is only because I believe them.

It should seem upon the whole of the inquiries upon this point, that it is very uncertain when ships may penetrate far to the northward of Spitzbergen, and that it depends not only upon the season, but other accidents, when the Polar seas may be so free from ice as to permit attempts to make discoveries ^h.

Possibly, therefore, if a King's officer was sent from year to year on board one of the Greenland ships, the lucky opportunity might be seized, and the Navy Board might pay for the use of the vessel, if it was taken from the whale fishery, in order to proceed as far as may be towards the North Pole.

^h Captain Robinson hath informed me, that at the latter end of last April, a Whitby ship was in N. lat. 80, without having been materially obstructed by the ice.

DAINES BARRINGTON, F.R.S.

Sold by BENJAMIN WHITE, Fleet-street.